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Prasanna Amcrasinghe

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CSA LLP

4807 SPICEWOOD SPRINGS RD.

BLDG. 4, SUITE 201

AUSTIN, TX 78759

EXAMINER

MEINECKE DIAZ, SUSANNA M

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3623

DATE MAILED: 11/06/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/008,254

Applicant(s)

AMERASINGHE ET AL.

Examiner

Susanna M. Diaz

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 14 August 2006.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-3, 5, 6, 12-17, 19-21, 28-30 and 45-50 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-3, 5, 6, 12-17, 19-21, 28-30 and 45-50 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on August 14, 2006 has been entered.

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 12-17, 19-21, 28-30, 45, 46, and 48 have been amended.

Claims 49-50 have been added.

Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 12-17, 19-21, 28-30, and 45-50 are presented for examination.

Response to Amendment

2. The previously pending claim objection is withdrawn in response to Applicant's claim amendments.

Response to Arguments

3. Applicant's arguments filed August 14, 2006 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

Applicant argues that "the cited sections of Sultan do not provide disclosure of generation of a forecast series that includes the various identified information and that is used in the generation of an associated forecast, as provided in the amended claims"

(page 13 of Applicant's response) The Examiner respectfully disagrees. Col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 11, lines 9-67; and col. 12, lines 1-11 of Sultan disclose how the various recited elements are integrated with each set of forecast data. For example, the desired personnel, time period, and access controls are associated with each forecast. Applicant has not pointed out which specific piece of data is not included in the forecast series.

Claim Objections

4. Claim 49 is objected to because of the following informalities:

Claim 49, line 1, delete "data", insert --date--

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

5. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

6. Claims 1-3, 5, 6, 12-17, 19-21, 28-30, and 49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 1 is directed toward "a computer system" and it recites "a forecast series block configured to...", "an opportunity and revenue scheduling creation block configured to...", and "a forecast creation block." It is not clear what a "block" is. If a "block" refers to software, the software should be expressly executed using hardware

(e.g., a processor or computer) in order to define elements of the system. At present, system claim 1 fails to recite any system elements to define the metes and bounds of the claim. Also, the term "configured to" is vague and indefinite because it is not clear if the recited functionality is actively performed or only capable of being performed. Claims 12, 15, and 28 recite the same "blocks" recited in claim 1; therefore, the same rejections apply.

Claims 2, 3, 5, 6, and 49 are dependent from claim 1 and therefore inherit the same rejections under § 112, 2nd paragraph. Claims 13 and 14 are dependent from claim 12 and therefore inherit the same rejections under § 112, 2nd paragraph. Claims 16-21 are dependent from claim 15 and therefore inherit the same rejections under § 112, 2nd paragraph. Claims 29 and 30 are dependent from claim 28 and therefore inherit the same rejections under § 112, 2nd paragraph.

Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

7. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

8. Claims 1-3, 12, 45-48, and 50 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Sultan (U.S. Patent No. 6,804,657).

Sultan discloses a computer system comprising:

[Claim 1] a forecast series block configured to:

identify hierarchy data defining a hierarchy structure of an organization, including data identifying a hierarchical position of each member of the organization (col. 2, lines 19-21; col. 11, lines 9-26);

identify a date and time to generate a forecast (col. 2, lines 35-37; col. 3, lines 60-64 -- A sales forecast over a selected time period is generated. A time period implies a date and time. Alternatively, if a user requests a forecast in "real-time," as disclosed by Sultan, it is understood that the forecast is to be generated at the present date and time);

identify members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the members derived from the hierarchy (col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- A regional manager may view a forecast by rolling up the forecast information of all those directly or indirectly reporting to him and a Division Head may generate a forecast of those reporting to him and the CEO can do the same by entering parameters. The database 310 is accessed and a forecast is generated corresponding to the parameters entered by aggregating the stored forecast information);

identify forecast data to be automatically analyzed to generate the forecast (Fig. 4; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- The forecast is generated using a computer system, i.e., automatically);

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identify a visibility mode for the forecast (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24);
and

generate a forecast series comprising the identified hierarchy data, the identified date and time to generate the forecast, the identity of the members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the identity of the forecast data to be automatically analyzed, and the identified visibility model (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data);

an opportunity and revenue scheduling creation block configured to identify forecast data (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data, which include predicted sales data in terms of a selected currency amount); and

a forecast creation block configured to generate the forecast, using the forecast series (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data. The final forecast and access thereto is defined by the forecast series data);

[Claim 2] wherein the hierarchy structure comprises a plurality of management levels, and the forecast series block is further configured to:

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define visibility rules that specify the forecast data that are visible to each management level of the organization to be stored on the storage device, and include the visibility rules in the forecast series (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24), and

the forecast creation block is further configured to generate a forecast for any management level of the organization, wherein each forecast that is generated is based on forecast data that are visible to the management level for which that forecast corresponds as specified by the visibility rules (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 7, lines 44-52 -- "The entered pipeline and sales information, however, should not be universally accessible by all members of the sales organization. For example, the member of the sales force occupying the Sales Manager position B11 should have access to the pipeline and forecast sales information entered and/or modified by his or her hierarchically-lower Account Supervisors B111, B112 and B113 and entered by those Account representatives (e.g., B1121-B1125, among others) that report to him"; col. 11, lines 9-26 -- The Regional Manager may view pipeline or forecast information by rolling up the pipeline or forecast information for all those directly or indirectly reporting to him. Subsequently Division Managers and CEOs can perform the same task);

[Claim 3] wherein a forecast is generated for a manager (col. 7, lines 12-25 -- A manager can modify forecast data to be used in generation of a forecast; col. 11, lines 9-30 -- Various levels of managers can request forecast generation), and

the visibility rules include a maximum hierarchy depth search value n defining a search scope such that the forecast generated for the manager is generated from the manager's own forecast data and from forecast data corresponding to members of the

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organization who are defined to be both subordinate to the manager and occupy a management level in the hierarchy that is $\leq n$ levels below a management level occupied by the manager (col. 7, lines 5-64 -- "Sales Manager position B11 should have access to the pipeline and forecast sales information entered and/or modified by his or her hierarchically-lower Account Supervisors B111, B112 and B113 and entered by those Account representatives (e.g., B1121-B1125, among others) that report to him. However, the Sales Manager B11 may have no reason to access either pipeline or forecast information from Sales Managers B12, B13 (even though B12 and B13 belong to the same Division as B11) or that of any other Sales Manager or any hierarchically higher Regional manager, Division Head or CEO. To restrict access to the pipeline and/or forecast information, the assigned permission levels are used. In general, the permission levels for accessing pipeline and/or forecast information matches a sales force member's hierarchical position within the sales organization, unless such sales force member belongs to an "overlay organization" that participates in the opportunity and has permission to add information to it, but does not "own" the corresponding forecast. The maximum depth as indicated by this rule would equal the total number of levels below the member with respect to hierarchy).

Sultan discloses a computer system comprising:

[Claim 12] a forecast series block configured to:

identify hierarchy data defining members of an organization and a hierarchical position of each member of the organization (col. 2, lines 19-21; col. 11, lines 9-26);

determine an identity of a current forecast participant who is a member of the organization (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 6, lines 20-26 -- Access to the system is controlled; therefore, the system keeps track of who accesses, inputs, and views data);

identify members of the organization who are subordinate to the current forecast participant based on the hierarchy data (col. 2, lines 19-21; col. 11, lines 9-26);

identify a date and time to generate a forecast (col. 2, lines 35-37; col. 3, lines 60-64 -- A sales forecast over a selected time period is generated. A time period implies a date and time. Alternatively, if a user requests a forecast in "real-time," as disclosed by Sultan, it is understood that the forecast is to be generated at the present date and time);

identify members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the members derived from the hierarchy (col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- A regional manager may view a forecast by rolling up the forecast information of all those directly or indirectly reporting to him and a Division Head may generate a forecast of those reporting to him and the CEO can do the same by entering parameters. The database 310 is accessed and a forecast is generated corresponding to the parameters entered by aggregating the stored forecast information);

identify forecast data to be automatically analyzed to generate the forecast (Fig. 4; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- The forecast is generated using a computer system, i.e., automatically);

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identify a visibility mode for the forecast (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24);
and

generate a forecast series comprising the identified hierarchy data, the identity of the current forecast participant, the identity of members of the organization who are subordinate to the current forecast participant, the date and time to generate the forecast, the identity of the members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the identity of the forecast data to be automatically analyzed, and the identified visibility model (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 6, lines 20-26; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data);

an opportunity and revenue scheduling creation block configured to identify forecast data corresponding to the members of the organization (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data, which include predicted sales data in terms of a selected currency amount); and

a forecast creation block configured to generate the forecast, using the forecast series (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data. The final forecast and access thereto is defined by the forecast series data); and

a forecast creation block configured to generate forecasts for one or more members of the organization who are identified as being subordinate to the current

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forecast participant, using the forecast series (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 27-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data. The final forecast and access thereto is defined by the forecast series data); and

present forecast data to the current forecast participant (col. 8, line 56 through col. 12, line 29).

[Claims 45-48, 50] Claims 45-48 and 50 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 1-3 and 12 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

9. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

10. Claims 5, 6, 13-17, 19-21, 28-30, and 49 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sultan (U.S. Patent No. 6,804,657), as applied to claims 1 and 12 above.

[Claims 5, 6] As per claim 5, Sultan discloses that the opportunity and revenue scheduling creation block is further configured to enable a member of the organization to submit a forecast to a superior (col. 7, lines 5-37; col. 8, lines 56-30); however, Sultan does not expressly teach that the member is prevented from modifying the forecast after

it has been submitted. Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of data reporting at the time of Applicant's invention to prevent modification of data once it has been formally submitted to a higher authority. Such a practice helps to ensure the integrity of data by encouraging people to check the accuracy of data before it is officially submitted to a higher authority. Since Sultan's managers rely on the accuracy of their forecasts in order to make global sales forecasts for a multi-national company (col. 3, lines 42-45), the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan such that the member of the organization (submitting a forecast) is prevented from modifying the forecast after it has been submitted (to a superior) in order to help ensure the integrity of data by encouraging members to check the accuracy of data before it is officially submitted to a higher authority, thereby improving the likelihood that the aggregated forecasts will yield more accurate global sales forecasts.

Regarding claim 6, Sultan discloses that the forecast creation block is further configured to present forecast data in a graphical format that enables a member to compare forecast data corresponding to related forecasts over time that are specified to be visible to that member (col. 6, lines 4-26 -- Members of the sales force may be granted access to information stored in the database. This information may be viewed via the Internet; col. 11, lines 9-12: "Regional Manager B3 may view a pipeline and/or a forecast by rolling up (summing) the pipeline and/or forecast information of all those directly or indirectly reporting to him." The pipeline contains multiple forecasts that are

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viewed simultaneously. The information is graphical as depicted in Figure 3: Forecast Summary by Product).

[Claim 49] Sultan discloses that the date and time to generate a forecast comprises:

a base period identifying a period over which forecast items are aggregated (col. 8, line 56 through col. 9, line 1);

a start period identifying the earliest date for which the forecast can be generated (col. 8, line 56 through col. 9, line 1 -- By specifying a future time period over which sales are forecasted, the beginning of the time period is the "start period identifying the earliest date for which the forecast can be generated").

Regarding claim 49, Sultan does not expressly disclose an interval period identifying a frequency at which forecasts are made within the base period; however, Sultan does aggregate sales forecasts for a specific period of time (col. 8, lines 63-66). Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of forecasting to forecast sales over a period of a certain number of days. Considering that most retail locations open and close shop daily, by aggregating forecasts for such retail locations over the course of x number of days, forecasts are aggregated based on a daily frequency. Since Sultan's sales forecasts may be utilized to predict global sales for a multi-national company (col. 3, lines 42-45) and many retail locations open and close shop daily, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan's forecast date and time to include an

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interval period identifying a frequency at which forecasts are made within the base period in order to account for the common hours of operation of many retail locations (e.g., opening and closing daily), thereby assisting in aggregating forecasts corresponding to multiple days of operation of a retail location.

[Claims 13, 14] Sultan discloses that the current forecast participant is a manager whose forecast is determined, at least in part, on forecasts that are submitted by one or more selected members of the organization who are subordinate to the manager (col. 2, lines 1-5; col. 8, line 56 through col. 12, line 29) and the forecast creation block is further configured to generate a forecast for the manager based on a combination of forecasts submitted by said one or more selected members and any forecast that is automatically generated (col. 2, lines 1-5; col. 8, line 56 through col. 12, line 29). Sultan does not expressly teach the step of automatically generating a forecast for any member among said one or more selected members who has yet to submit a forecast (claim 13), wherein the forecast creation block is further configured to automatically calculate forecasts for said one or more selected members of the organization who are subordinate to the manager and have not submitted their forecast in a recursive manner from lower levels to higher levels in the organization's hierarchy, wherein the manager occupies at least a second level of management in the organization's hierarchy (claim 14). Sultan does allow managers to alter forecast data entered by their sales people (col. 7, lines 5-43); therefore, Sultan envisions the capability of refining forecast data as needed. Additionally, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of

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forecasting to request any missing data that is needed to complete the forecast. This practice is utilized to retrieve any data that is needed to timely complete a forecast.

Since Sultan's global sales forecasts are dependent on forecast data received from sales people, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan to perform the step of automatically generating a forecast for any member among said one or more selected members who has yet to submit a forecast (claim 13) in order to facilitate the generation of complete and accurate global sales forecasts in a timely manner. Additionally, Sultan's higher level forecasts rely on the forecast data received from sales people who are part of the lower levels of the organization's hierarchy. Therefore, the Examiner further submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan such that the forecast creation block is further configured to automatically calculate forecasts for said one or more selected members of the organization who are subordinate to the manager and have not submitted their forecast in a recursive manner from lower levels to higher levels in the organization's hierarchy, wherein the manager occupies at least a second level of management in the organization's hierarchy (claim 14) in order to more timely gather information in an order that reflects the order in which forecasted data sets are needed (i.e., higher level forecasts are based on data provided by members of the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy).

Sultan discloses a system comprising:

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[Claim 15] a forecast series block configured to:

identify hierarchy data defining a hierarchy structure of an organization, including data identifying a hierarchical position of each member of the organization (col. 2, lines 19-21; col. 11, lines 9-26);

identify rules that specify forecast data that are visible to each member of the organization (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24);

identify a date and time to generate a forecast (col. 2, lines 35-37; col. 3, lines 60-64 -- A sales forecast over a selected time period is generated. A time period implies a date and time. Alternatively, if a user requests a forecast in "real-time," as disclosed by Sultan, it is understood that the forecast is to be generated at the present date and time);

identify members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the members derived from the hierarchy (col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- A regional manager may view a forecast by rolling up the forecast information of all those directly or indirectly reporting to him and a Division Head may generate a forecast of those reporting to him and the CEO can do the same by entering parameters. The database 310 is accessed and a forecast is generated corresponding to the parameters entered by aggregating the stored forecast information);

identify forecast data to be automatically analyzed to generate the forecast (Fig. 4; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- The forecast is generated using a computer system, i.e., automatically);

identify a visibility mode for the forecast (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24);
and

generate a forecast series comprising the identified hierarchy data, the identified rules, the date and time to generate a forecast, the identity of the members of the organization to be included in the forecast, the identity of the forecast data to be automatically analyzed, and the identified visibility model (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data);

an opportunity and revenue scheduling creation block configured to send data comprising a set of interactive components via a computer network to a client, a portion of which enable forecast data corresponding to members of the organization to be entered via the client (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 4-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12, lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data, which include predicted sales data in terms of a selected currency amount); and

a forecast creation block configured to generate a forecast for members of the organization using the forecast series, wherein each forecast is generated based on forecast data that are visible to corresponding members according to visibility rules, and send forecast data corresponding to the forecast to the client to be viewed by a user through use of the set of interactive components (col. 2, lines 19-21, 35-37, 60-64; col. 3, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24, 46-58; col. 6, lines 4-48; col. 11, lines 9-67; col. 12,

lines 1-11 -- Forecasts are associated with the recited data. The final forecast and access thereto is defined by the forecast series data);

[Claim 16] wherein the hierarchy structure comprises a plurality of management levels, the forecast series block is further configured to:

define visibility rules that specify the forecast data that are visible to each management level of the organization (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24), and

include the visibility rules in the forecast series (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24), and

the forecast creation block is further configured to generate a forecast for any management level of the organization, wherein each forecast that is generated is based on forecast data that are visible to the management level for which that forecast corresponds as specified by the visibility rules (col. 2, lines 60-64; col. 5, lines 15-24; col. 7, lines 44-52 -- "The entered pipeline and sales information, however, should not be universally accessible by all members of the sales organization. For example, the member of the sales force occupying the Sales Manager position B11 should have access to the pipeline and forecast sales information entered and/or modified by his or her hierarchically-lower Account Supervisors B111, B112 and B113 and entered by those Account representatives (e.g., B1121-B1125, among others) that report to him"; col. 11, lines 9-26 -- The Regional Manager may view pipeline or forecast information by rolling up the pipeline or forecast information for all those directly or indirectly reporting to him. Subsequently Division Managers and CEOs can perform the same task);

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[Claim 17] wherein a forecast is generated for a manager (col. 7, lines 12-25 -- A manager can modify forecast data to be used in generation of a forecast; col. 11, lines 9-30 -- Various levels of managers can request forecast generation), and

the visibility rules include a maximum hierarchy depth search value n defining a search scope such that the forecast generated for the manager is generated from the manager's own forecast data and from forecast data corresponding to members of the organization who are defined to be both subordinate to the manager and occupy a management level in the hierarchy that is $\leq n$ levels below a management level occupied by the manager (col. 7, lines 5-64 -- "Sales Manager position B11 should have access to the pipeline and forecast sales information entered and/or modified by his or her hierarchically-lower Account Supervisors B111, B112 and B113 and entered by those Account representatives (e.g., B1121-B1125, among others) that report to him. However, the Sales Manager B11 may have no reason to access either pipeline or forecast information from Sales Managers B12, B13 (even though B12 and B13 belong to the same Division as B11) or that of any other Sales Manager or any hierarchically higher Regional manager, Division Head or CEO. To restrict access to the pipeline and/or forecast information, the assigned permission levels are used. In general, the permission levels for access pipeline and/or forecast information matches a sales force member's hierarchical position within the sales organization, unless such sales force member belongs to an "overlay organization" that participates in the opportunity and has permission to add information to it, but does not "own" the corresponding forecast. The

maximum depth as indicated by this rule would equal the total number of levels below the member with respect to hierarchy);

[Claim 21] wherein the forecast creation block is further configured to send data to the client, and the interactive components are configured to present the forecast data in a graphical format that enables a member to compare forecast data corresponding to related forecasts over time that are specified to be visible to that member (col. 6, lines 4-26 -- Members of the sales force may be granted access to information stored in the database. This information may be viewed via the Internet; col. 11, lines 9-12:

“Regional Manager B3 may view a pipeline and/or a forecast by rolling up (summing) the pipeline and/or forecast information of all those directly or indirectly reporting to him.” The pipeline contains multiple forecasts that are viewed simultaneously. The information is graphical as depicted in Figure 3: Forecast Summary by Product).

As per claims 15 and 21, Sultan discloses that an interface may be provided via the Internet to input and view forecast data (col. 6, lines 4-26), yet Sultan does not expressly teach that the Internet interface is programmed using HTML components. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of Internet/web page programming to utilize HTML to program Internet/web pages. HTML is a very commonly used programming language due to its compatibility with various platforms and relative ease of programming. Since Sultan discloses the use of an Internet-based interface, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to program Sultan's

Internet-based interface using HTML since HTML is a very commonly used programming language due to its compatibility with various platforms and relative ease of programming, thereby making Sultan's interface widely accessible.

[Claim 19] Claim 19 recites limitations already addressed by the rejection of claim 5 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

[Claim 20] Sultan does not expressly teach that the forecast creation block is further configured to enable one or more of the superior to which the forecast was submitted and a system administrator to unsubmit the forecast such that the member who submitted that forecast is enabled to modify the forecast. However, Official Notice is taken that it was old and well-known in the art of data reporting at the time of Applicant's invention for a superior and/or a system administrator to return a collection of data to a data source for correction of the data. This practice allows for efficient collaboration on data collection for data analysis and reporting purposes. Since Sultan's global sales forecasts rely on the provision of accurate sales forecasts from individual sales people, the Examiner submits that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to modify Sultan such that the forecast creation block is further configured to enable one or more of the superior to which the forecast was submitted and a system administrator to unsubmit the forecast such that the member who submitted that forecast is enabled to modify the forecast in order to facilitate

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efficient collaboration on data collection for data analysis and reporting purposes, thereby encouraging collection of the most accurate forecast data possible.

[Claims 28-30] Claims 28-30 recite limitations already addressed by the rejection of claims 1-3, 5, 6, 12-17, and 19-21 above; therefore, the same rejection applies.

Conclusion

11. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Shah et al. (US 2002/0099692) -- Discloses an analytic server that generates forecasts based on various factors.

Kauffman et al. (WO 00/67191) -- Discloses a method for predicting product demand using self-organizing demand loops.

12. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Susanna M. Diaz whose telephone number is (571) 272-6733. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday, 8 am - 4:30 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tariq Hafiz can be reached on (571) 272-6729. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Susanna M. Diaz
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 3623

October 30, 2006